

**DEFECTION OF A RUSSIAN SEAMAN**  
(TESTIMONY OF VLADISLAW STEPANOVICH TARASOV)

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**HEARING**  
BEFORE THE  
**COMMITTEE ON UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES**  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
EIGHTY-EIGHTH CONGRESS  
FIRST SESSION

SEPTEMBER 19, 1963  
INCLUDING INDEX

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COMMITTEE ON UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PUBLIC LAW 601, 79TH CONGRESS

The legislation under which the House Committee on Un-American Activities operates is Public Law 601, 79th Congress [1946]; 60 Stat. 812, which provides:

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, \* \* \**

PART 2—RULES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

RULE X

SEC. 121. STANDING COMMITTEES

\* \* \* \* \*

17. Committee on Un-American Activities, to consist of nine Members.

RULE XI

POWERS AND DUTIES OF COMMITTEES

\* \* \* \* \*

(q) (1) Committee on Un-American Activities.

(A) Un-American activities.

(2) The Committee on Un-American Activities, as a whole or by subcommittee, is authorized to make from time to time investigations of (i) the extent, character, and objects of un-American propaganda activities in the United States, (ii) the diffusion within the United States of subversive and un-American propaganda that is instigated from foreign countries or of a domestic origin and attacks the principle of the form of government as guaranteed by our Constitution, and (iii) all other questions in relation thereto that would aid Congress in any necessary remedial legislation.

The Committee on Un-American Activities shall report to the House (or to the Clerk of the House if the House is not in session) the results of any such investigation, together with such recommendations as it deems advisable.

For the purpose of any such investigation, the Committee on Un-American Activities, or any subcommittee thereof, is authorized to sit and act at such times and places within the United States, whether or not the House is sitting, has recessed, or has adjourned, to hold such hearings, to require the attendance of such witnesses and the production of such books, papers, and documents, and to take such testimony, as it deems necessary. Subpoenas may be issued under the signature of the chairman of the committee or any subcommittee or by any member designated by any such chairman, and may be served by any person designated by any such chairman or member.

\* \* \* \* \*

RULE XII

LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT BY STANDING COMMITTEES

SEC. 136. To assist the Congress in appraising the administration of the laws and in developing such amendments or related legislation as it may deem necessary, each standing committee of the Senate and the House of Representatives shall exercise continuous watchfulness of the execution by the administrative agencies concerned of any laws, the subject matter of which is within the jurisdiction of such committee; and, for that purpose, shall study all pertinent reports and data submitted to the Congress by the agencies in the executive branch of the Government.

RULES ADOPTED BY THE 88TH CONGRESS

House Resolution 5, January 9, 1963

RULE X

STANDING COMMITTEES

1. There shall be elected by the House, at the commencement of each Congress,  
(r) Committee on Un-American Activities, to consist of nine Members.

RULE XI

POWERS AND DUTIES OF COMMITTEES

18. Committee on Un-American Activities.

(a) Un-American activities.

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27. To assist the House in appraising the administration of the laws and in developing such amendments or related legislation as it may deem necessary, each standing committee of the House shall exercise continuous watchfulness of the execution by the administrative agencies concerned of any laws, the subject matter of which is within the jurisdiction of such committee; and, for that purpose, shall study all pertinent reports and data submitted to the House by the agencies in the executive branch of the Government.

### SYNOPSIS

The Committee on Un-American Activities met in public session on September 19, 1963, in Washington, D.C., to hear firsthand the reasons for a Russian seaman's swim to freedom in the harbor at Calcutta, India, in November 1962. A summary of his testimony follows:

Vladislav Stepanovich Tarasov was born in the Ukrainian Republic of the Soviet Union on June 25, 1938. In 1954, after completing 7 years of general schooling, he joined the Komsomol (Young Communist League) because he wanted to continue his education. Most of the better advanced schools were all but closed to young people who did not belong to the Komsomol.

In 1956, at the conclusion of 2 years' training at a nautical school in Yenotayevsk, Vladislav began working as a crewman on Soviet fishing vessels in the Caspian Sea. He soon began to doubt the economic advantages of being employed in a Communist state when he realized his pay, because of the changed price structure in the U.S.S.R., represented less buying power than that received by seamen who had performed the same duties 4 and 6 years earlier.

Young Tarasov also learned about the Russian seamen's unnecessary exposure to danger because everything in the Soviet Union has to be done according to top-echelon Communist planning. Ships in the Caspian fishing fleet were forced to go to sea at fixed times, regardless of their state of repair. A captain of an unseaworthy ship would have lost his position if he had refused to sail when scheduled to do so by the plan "from above." Vladislav learned that the Soviet Union loses about 10 vessels a year in the Caspian Sea because of neglected maintenance and unsafe navigation procedures.

The seamen's union, like everything else in the Soviet Union, is controlled by the Communist Party and cannot protect or promote the interests of Russian sailors. Rather, the union serves as a vehicle by which the Communist Party imposes its will upon the seamen. On one occasion when Tarasov protested conditions on his ship, he was transferred to a much less desirable job on a different vessel.

From 1959 to 1962, Tarasov studied electro-mechanical energy at the Kherson Nautical School. During this period he married and became the father of a son. He was not able to obtain an apartment for his family, however, so he stayed at the school during the week and visited his wife and child at her parents' overcrowded dwelling on weekends.

In 1961 and 1962, Vladislav Tarasov began listening to Voice of America broadcasts and reading copies of *America*, the U.S. magazine which is distributed in the Soviet Union under a cultural exchange agreement. From these sources and Russian translations of certain American books, he became convinced that the United States offered freedom and opportunity to the individual.

Also in 1962, Tarasov returned to sea duty on an oceangoing tanker. He had already given much thought to the possibility of defecting to the free world if the opportunity arose, but it was not without certain reservations. He had been told that Soviet defectors experienced unfriendly receptions and extreme hardships in the West. He was also concerned about countermeasures that might be taken against his relatives if he defected. He reasoned that this latter concern was groundless, however, because he had left his parents' home in 1954 and had never even had a normally close family relationship with his wife and child. Thus, he did not believe Soviet authorities would hold his relatives accountable for his actions.

Tarasov put all reservations about defecting out of his mind once and for all after having an ominous run-in with a political commissar at sea.

A political commissar, who is always a Communist Party member, is assigned to every Soviet ship to keep an eye on crew members and indoctrinate them with party propaganda. During Vladislav's voyage to India in late 1962, he utilized every conceivable excuse to avoid having to attend the boring, but compulsory, political meetings conducted aboard the tanker by the commissar. When Tarasov returned to his ship's quarters on one occasion, he found the political commissar rummaging through his personal effects, including notes he had written. The intruder said he now understood why Tarasov had missed so many political meetings and implied to the seaman that he would never again be permitted to engage in foreign travel on Soviet ships. Tarasov realized he would have to escape when the tanker arrived in India, or probably forfeit the opportunity to do so forever.

On the night of November 25, 1962, when the Russian tanker was anchored in the harbor at Calcutta, Vladislav Tarasov escaped through a porthole and swam to a nearby American ship. He asked the captain of the American ship for asylum.

As a means of attempting to prevent his defection, the Soviet consul in Calcutta falsely accused Tarasov of having stolen 700 rubles immediately before escaping from the tanker and appealed to Indian authorities to arrest and hold him for extradition to the U.S.S.R. On November 28, 1962, Indian authorities boarded the American ship and arrested the defector after Soviet officials had promised to produce witnesses to the alleged theft. Tarasov was held in a Calcutta jail.

The Soviet authorities, realizing that theft in Indian territorial waters was not a ground for extradition, later dropped the charge. Accordingly, the prisoner was released on January 10, 1963. He was immediately rearrested, however, on a new Soviet charge that he had committed the alleged robbery aboard the Russian tanker while it was in international waters. Again, Soviet officials promised to produce evidence in support of the charges against Vladislav.

When the Soviets not only failed to satisfy an Indian court that Tarasov was guilty of their charges, but other evidence convinced the court that documents introduced as evidence against Tarasov by Soviet authorities were fabricated, he was released permanently.

After a thorough screening by U.S. security officers, Tarasov was permitted to come to the United States where he hopes eventually to become a citizen.

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In addition to the information summarized above, Vladislav Tarasov made the following interesting observations when he appeared before the Committee on Un-American Activities:

1. Churches are permitted to function in the Soviet Union, although they are attended mostly by older persons in rural parts of the nation.

2. Most of the crimes that occur in the Soviet Union are not reported in the Soviet press.

3. Privileges enjoyed by its members, not ideology, are what attract most people to the Communist Party in the Soviet Union.

4. There is widespread unhappiness among the Russian people concerning constant pressure exerted upon them by the Communist apparatus, which appears to exist for no other purpose than to exert such pressure.

5. Many, many Russians would like to defect to the West, but few of them ever have the opportunity to do so.



**DEFECTION OF A RUSSIAN SEAMAN**  
**(Testimony of Vladislav Stepanovich Tarasov)**

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1963

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES,  
*Washington, D.C.*

PUBLIC HEARING

The Committee on Un-American Activities met, pursuant to call, at 10 a.m., in the Caucus Room, Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C., Honorable Edwin E. Willis (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Representatives Edwin E. Willis, of Louisiana; William M. Tuck, of Virginia; Joe R. Pool, of Texas; Richard H. Ichord, of Missouri; George F. Senner, Jr., of Arizona; August E. Johansen, of Michigan; Donald E. Bruce, of Indiana; and Henry C. Schadeberg, of Wisconsin.

Staff members present: Francis J. McNamara, director; Alfred M. Nittle, counsel; and Donald T. Appell, chief investigator.

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order.

A Library of Congress study of Soviet treatment of racial and nationality groups within the U.S.S.R., prepared for a Senate subcommittee, is aptly entitled *The Soviet Empire: Prison House of Nations and Races*. A totalitarian Communist empire, which is a prison house of nations and races, is also, by that very fact, a prison house of people, many millions of them—Russians, as well as those of other nationalities.

Over the years, hundreds of thousands of persons have escaped from this prison house. They have voted against communism with their feet, because they have had no other way of doing so. They are still doing this. Neither the wall in Berlin, nor the Iron Curtain of barbed wire barricades, watchtowers, and minefields that ring the rest of the border of the Communist empire can stop the flow.

Each escape is cause for rejoicing, a gain for freedom, a victory for liberty. When the escapee is young and still has most of his life ahead of him, there is special cause for rejoicing.

We Americans sometimes forget that our country is the bastion of liberty in a world threatened by communism and that it is so regarded by millions who seek our shores for only one reason—because they long for the freedom which we too often take for granted and sometimes abuse, as though it were something that could never be lost or destroyed.

The committee is convened today to hear the testimony of an escapee from the Soviet Union—a young man who, until some months

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ago, never knew those fundamental freedoms which are so essential to human progress and to individual fulfillment.

The witness is Mr. Vladislav Stepanovich Tarasov. Mr. Tarasov, please rise and raise your right hand.

Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you are about to give will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mr. TARASOV. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Tarasov, understandably you can't converse fluently in English although I am informed you understand it well, so we have asked Mr. Victor Fediay to act as translator. And, Mr. Fediay, it is necessary that I administer a special oath to you.

Mr. Fediay, do you swear that you will well and truly interpret the questions and answers, so help you God?

Mr. FEDIAY. I do.

Mr. POOL. Mr. Chairman, I would like to inquire as to the interpreter's position. Is he with the State Department?

The CHAIRMAN. That will be developed I am quite sure.

Proceed, Mr. Nittle.

Mr. NITTLE. Mr. Fediay, would you kindly state your qualifications to serve as interpreter for Mr. Tarasov?

Mr. FEDIAY. I am a translator with the Library of Congress and have been for 14 years.

Mr. NITTLE. Do you specialize in the Russian language?

Mr. FEDIAY. Yes, sir.

Mr. NITTLE. Have you had occasion to serve as interpreter for persons speaking Russian?

Mr. FEDIAY. Yes, sir; I have served as interpreter on many occasions. Quite recently I was with the American delegation to the Soviet Union for several months.

TESTIMONY OF VLADISLAV TARASOV (ASSISTED BY VICTOR FEDIAY, INTERPRETER)

Mr. NITTLE. Mr. Tarasov, would you state your full name for the record please?

Mr. TARASOV (in English). Vladislav Stepanovich Tarasov.

Mr. NITTLE. When and where were you born?

Mr. TARASOV. I was born in the Priluki area of the Ukrainian Republic in 1938, 25 June.

Mr. NITTLE. Did I understand you to say 1938 was the year of your birth?

Mr. TARASOV. 1938.

Mr. NITTLE. You are now 25 years old, is that correct?

Mr. TARASOV. Yes, sir.

Mr. NITTLE. Are you presently living in the Washington, D.C., area?

Mr. TARASOV. Yes, sir.

Mr. NITTLE. What is your present occupation?

Mr. TARASOV. I just now completed my course in the English language at Georgetown University.

Mr. NITTLE. Of what country are you a citizen?

Mr. TARASOV. I am not a citizen for any country until the Government of the United States will give me a citizenship in this country.

Mr. NITTLE. Of what country were you formerly a citizen?

Mr. TARASOV. In the U.S.S.R.

Mr. NITTLE. Mr. Tarasov, is your appearance before this committee today completely voluntary?

Mr. TARASOV. Yes, sir.

Mr. NITTLE. Would you relate the extent of your formal education?

Mr. TARASOV. From 1946 to 1953 I completed the seventh grade level. From 1954 until 1956 I completed Nautical School in Yenotayevsk, Astrakhanskaya Oblast.

The CHAIRMAN. How would that compare to high school education, below or above?

Mr. TARASOV. I don't know about this.

Mr. FEDIAY. It would be a little bit higher than the high school education in the United States—high school education plus 2 or 3 additional years.

Mr. TARASOV. Then from 1959 until 1962 I was studying at the Kherson Nautical School in electro-mechanical energy. At the same time I completed my tenth grade by correspondence.

Mr. NITTLE. We think you should state for the record whether you are in the United States with the approval of the Soviet Government.

Mr. TARASOV. No.

Mr. NITTLE. Would you state the circumstances under which you are here?

Mr. TARASOV (through interpreter). On the 25th of November I escaped off the Soviet ship *Chernovtzi* in the port of Calcutta and reached the American ship that was stationed in the same port.

Mr. NITTLE. Was the Soviet vessel aboard which you were serving a merchant vessel?

Mr. TARASOV. This Soviet ship was a tanker, a Soviet tanker.

Mr. NITTLE. Do you recollect the name of the American ship in which you sought refuge?

Mr. TARASOV (in English). It was the SS *Steel Surveyor*.

Mr. NITTLE. How did you reach the SS *Steel Surveyor*?

Mr. TARASOV (through interpreter). I jumped off the Soviet ship, from the window of the Soviet ship and porthole of the Soviet ship, and I swam to an American ship and went aboard it. It was at night, and I went aboard the American ship myself.

Mr. NITTLE. Did you then bring your defection to the attention of the captain of the United States vessel?

Mr. TARASOV (in English). Yes, I did.

Mr. NITTLE. Did you indicate to him that you sought asylum?

Mr. TARASOV. Yes, I did.

Mr. NITTLE. Did you have any difficulty in obtaining asylum?

Mr. TARASOV (through interpreter). No, I was promised asylum.

Mr. NITTLE. Having received the promise of asylum by the American captain, did you have any difficulty thereafter?

Mr. TARASOV. The Soviet authorities in Calcutta, the consul of the Soviet Union in Calcutta, and the captain of the ship accused me of stealing 700 rubles from the Soviet ship and asked for arrest.

They knew that I was on the American ship and asked the Indian authorities to arrest me for this theft.

Mr. NITTLE. Were you then arrested by the Indian authorities pursuant to the charge made by the Soviet officials?

Mr. TARASOV. I was arrested by Indian authorities on American ship on the 28th of November and was put in jail in Calcutta. I was kept in jail until January 10, 1963, by Indian authorities. The Soviet authorities promised to produce witnesses of the theft. They never did because actually this thing did not occur.

Then, realizing that they cannot extradite me if the theft occurred in the Indian territorial waters, they changed the charge.

Then, naturally, the Indian authorities couldn't keep me any longer, and I was released on January 10, but immediately after I left the jail I was rearrested under the charge that this theft occurred in international waters; and then they asked the Indian authorities to extradite me for the trial in the Soviet Union on the basis of the theft in international waters.

The CHAIRMAN. Are you indicating as a fact, or as an honest belief, that this charge was filed against you as a means of preventing your defection?

Mr. TARASOV. Yes, that is exactly what it is.

Mr. TUCK. Was he under any accusation of theft prior to the time he defected?

Mr. TARASOV. I never had any charges against me of that type.

Mr. NITTLE. Was a hearing held before the Indian authorities following this second charge?

Mr. TARASOV. Then the Soviet authorities promised to produce 12 witnesses and documentation of the theft, and the Indian authorities asked for it. Witnesses were never produced. The captain of the ship came over, and the documents that were shown were forged, and the Indian authorities decided that there is no case against me.

There was no prima facie case for extradition of any type.

Mr. JOHANSEN. I didn't get the significance. You said the captain of the American ship appeared in court.

Mr. FEDIAY. It was the captain of the Soviet ship that came to the hearings.

Mr. NITTLE. Would you comment upon the impression you received as to the fairness of the trial conducted by the Indian authorities?

Mr. TARASOV (through interpreter). I am very happy and very glad that the Indian courts are operating completely fairly in a very democratic basis. This is why I was able to escape from the Soviet Union. In spite of the fact that they produced documents, the Indian authorities made a very thorough investigation of the case and decided for me and decided for my freedom.

The case was deeply analyzed by the Indian courts. I thank very much the Indian authorities for this type of very democratic procedure.

Mr. NITTLE. Was it not a fact that the Indian magistrate found that the Soviet charges were completely fabricated?

Mr. TARASOV. Yes. In the resolution of the Indian court there is a statement there is no prima facie case against me and that some of the documents were definitely fabricated.

The CHAIRMAN. At this point he has used the expression "prima facie." Do I understand that the procedure would be somewhat like a preliminary hearing when a charge is filed and a witness is found

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not to be in a position of ever being held because of lack of sufficient evidence. Is that about what the procedure was?

Mr. TARASOV. This extradition trial was being held and not finished, and they held me in the jail in India, but according to Indian law I understand they have to establish the case. Since the case was not established because of the Soviet Union not bringing the witnesses and all that they promised in the beginning and since the documents that were produced were considered by the court not to be valid enough, they had to drop the case immediately, and immediately when the case was dropped I was released.

Mr. NITTLE. Mr. Chairman, may I state that it is my understanding that the Indian legal system is based upon, and modeled after, the British system and is, hence, very close to our own.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, I would imagine it would be patterned after the English system. Proceed.

Mr. NITTLE. Mr. Tarasov, what do you believe would have happened to you if your escape attempt had failed, or if you had been extradited to the Soviet Union?

Mr. TARASOV. I don't know exactly what would have happened to me, but I know that according to the law in the Soviet Union, according to Article 56 of the Soviet law, anyone who refuses to go back to the Soviet Union without any permission of the government, anybody who leaves the country without the permission of the government, is liable to get punished 10 years of jail or be shot.

The CHAIRMAN. In that connection, I take it there is quite a contrast between the law in Russia, which prevents anyone from getting out of the country under the pains and penalty of severe punishment, and that of the United States. The students that we examined last week felt that they had a right to take the law into their own hands, to go anywhere they wanted.

This is not a question, Mr. Tarasov. I am merely making a statement.

Mr. NITTLE. Following this second hearing, were you then completely free?

Mr. TARASOV (in English). Yes, I was.

Mr. NITTLE. About how long have you been in the United States, Mr. Tarasov?

Mr. TARASOV. For about 3 months.

Mr. NITTLE. Prior to your reception here, were you interviewed by the security agencies of the United States?

The CHAIRMAN. May I say that we are entering into a sensitive area and we cannot disclose anything about our security agencies and their method of operation in an area of this kind, so I don't want the agencies named, but I am very much interested and am insistent that he describe whether there were careful screening and examining processes.

Mr. TARASOV (through interpreter). Yes, I was under hearings in this thing and I was investigated.

Mr. NITTLE. Now would you tell the committee what made you jump ship and seek political asylum in the United States when you realized what might happen to you if you failed in that attempt?

Mr. TARASOV (in English). I would like to make a short statement about this.

The CHAIRMAN. It is all right.

Mr. TARASOV. I would like to read it in English.

The CHAIRMAN. For the sake of accuracy and self-explanation, it will be perfectly all right.

Mr. TARASOV (in English). In 1961 and 1962 I began to feel that in the U.S.S.R. I was only a grain of sand in the desert, which at any moment could be blown anywhere by the wind of the dictatorial powers.

All my life I had been dependent on the whims of other people. When I worked for 3 years on the ships of the fishing fleet and was forced to perform the orders of ignorant superiors, I kept up courage with the hope that some day in the future everything would change. But as I got to know reality in the Soviet Union more and more, this hope for freedom blew away like smoke.

I realized that I not only had no chance of contributing to the improvement of the Soviet society but, equally important, I realized that those higher up—the engineers and command personnel—were almost as repressed in their actions as the small fry. And furthermore, they have to defend and promote the bureaucratic directives to explain the party line to the masses, which means they must lie out of very fear of losing their means of livelihood and even their physical freedom.

Just as a horse stops dead in its tracks when it reaches its goal, even though it would have been able to go on like the wind were that goal farther removed, so something inside me snapped when I realized that further study and advancement up the service ladder had no meaning for me.

In 1961 and 1962 I began to listen to the Voice of America radio broadcasts. I was also very lucky to obtain copies of the magazine *America*,<sup>1</sup> and I read a number of American books which were available in Russian translations in the Soviet Union, such as books by Theodore Dreiser, Jack London, and Mark Twain.

I began to understand that America is the leading country of the free world. I became convinced that there people are really equal under the law, that each person is able to build his own life without directives from above, and that each citizen through his own development brings good to society.

Mr. NITTLE. Mr. Tarasov, would you give us some more specific reasons why you decided to defect?

Mr. TARASOV. Yes, I can.

Mr. NITTLE. Would you do so?

Mr. TARASOV (through interpreter). When I started to work independently in the Soviet Union for the first time I actually realized that you cannot improve yourself in the country. The economic planning is such that you are pressed all the time, you work hard but you have nothing for it, and that was what was the situation on the fishing fleet in the Caspian Sea that I was working in.

If you consider, for instance, my pay in this fishing fleet and compare this pay with what was the pay throughout the years since 1950—I was employed in 1956 and I at that time for my work got 300 rubles, about \$300.

The CHAIRMAN. For how long a period of time?

<sup>1</sup> *America Illustrated*, American magazine distributed by USIA in Russia and Poland.

Mr. TARASOV. Five months. If you compare it with the price structure, actually we were getting less than it was in 1952 and we were getting less than it was in 1950 for the same type of job, with the price structure that existed at that time in the Soviet Union.

Mr. NITTLE. Could you explain why this occurred?

Mr. TARASOV. I think since all of the economic planning is done by the government—all the operations, all the industrial operations is in the hands of the government. They plan it according to government plans. They don't care about the people at all.

Mr. NITTLE. Would you relate in more detail the experience you had serving aboard the fishing fleet in the Caspian Sea?

Mr. TARASOV. Since everything is done according to the stiff and sometimes ridiculous planning, the ships for instance in my case were plying the Caspian Sea in disrepair conditions. The captain did not want to go to sea because he knew the ship was not safe, but the political controllers forced him to leave the shore and go into the sea, in spite of the fact that everybody connected with the operation knew that it makes no sense, but stiff planning makes them to do such a ridiculous thing.

In addition to that, the only privileged class in the Soviet Union are the high party officials, so that is what burned me up. For instance, in the school where I was going, we had the son of a very high party official. He was completely good-for-nothing, and at the same time they had to keep him.

When we were sent to school we had to have a certain amount of experience. He didn't have this experience. He was forced upon the school in a way. He was behaving badly, and at the same time they could not expel him. Anybody else doing that would have been expelled.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me ask you this question: Were you a member of a seamen's union or was there a seamen's union which could speak for the seamen in the protection and advancement of rights, wages, proper living conditions, and so on?

Mr. TARASOV. We did have a trade union of seamen, and I was a member of it on the Caspian Sea, but the trade unions in the Soviet Union are also under the control of the party; whatever the party is directing the unions to do, they do. They are not defending us. They are defending the interests of the party, just as everything else is done for defending the interests of the party.

Mr. JOHANSEN. Sort of a company union, I take it, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. NITTLE. I believe you stated, Mr. Tarasov, that the ships were forced to go to sea in a poor condition of repair in order to meet the planning quotas. Did your vessel sustain any casualties as a result of the condition in which it was forced to go to sea?

Mr. TARASOV. You have to understand on the Caspian Sea there are a lot of casualties that you maybe never hear about. About 10 ships are sunk in a season on the Caspian Sea because of casualties and accidents.

The CHAIRMAN. Because of what?

Mr. TARASOV. Because of accidents, neglect, not safe conditions of navigation.

Mr. NITTLE. Was not your seamen's union able to correct these conditions?

Mr. TARASOV. The trade union unfortunately is not in the position to influence those things, because everybody is under the pressure of a plan and, being under the pressure of a plan, they have to do those things according to the force that is pressing on them, the bureaucrats that are pressing on them.

The result is that the captain has to do whatever he is told to do because he will lose his position. He is not in a position not to do whatever he is asked to do, because all the time he is under the directives from above.

The CHAIRMAN. Who owned this ship?

Mr. TARASOV. Everything is owned by the government.

Mr. POOL. Did you ever speak up and protest conditions on this ship yourself?

Mr. TARASOV. Yes, I had the chance.

Mr. POOL. What happened after that?

Mr. TARASOV. As a punishment for my remarks, I was transferred from one ship to another. As a matter of fact, I went to the worst ship on the next assignment.

Mr. POOL. In other words, you don't have any freedom of speech over there without being penalized?

Mr. TARASOV. That is exactly the case.

Mr. NITTLE. Do the Soviet citizens resent the existence of the privileged class in the Soviet Union known as the Communist Party?

Mr. TARASOV. I am sure that everybody is unhappy about it.

Mr. NITTLE. In your travels to India aboard your vessel, was there any evidence of carelessness in the operation of the vessel?

Mr. TARASOV. We had, for instance, an accident on the ship when the mechanic of the ship, who was very high in the party structure, of the ship party structure, by his neglect somebody was injured and nothing happened to the mechanic. We complained about it, but nothing happened because he is better in the party than anybody else and he can do whatever he wants, so the fellow was injured and that is it. Nothing happens.

Mr. NITTLE. You also seemed to indicate that the pressure of the Communist Party is felt aboard ship. Apparently you had a political officer aboard ship, is this correct?

Mr. TARASOV (in English). Every ship carried a political commissar.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you mean a Soviet official other than the ship's captain and regular officers is present on board more or less all the time?

Mr. TARASOV. Yes, a special representative of the party whose duty is to watch the people. For example, on the second ship there is a questionnaire of what book do you read, and they look at your notes.

Mr. NITTLE. Did you personally have any experience with the efforts of the political officer to check on you, your beliefs and actions?

Mr. TARASOV (through interpreter). I will give you a small example. I was a correspondent for a while of a local paper and I went to a factory in this city, and the workers that were working in the shop that I visited asked me to complain about the fact that they don't have any ventilation in the shop, and to publish it in the paper. It came back from the editor's desk, and I was told that articles like that should not be published at all. As a matter of fact, they reprimanded me for the fact that I was writing this type of article criticizing the



working conditions instead of writing articles to promote better efficiency in the shop, to force them to work more and not to criticize the conditions.

Mr. NITTLE. While you were aboard ship, were you able to maintain the privacy of your papers and belongings?

Mr. TARASOV. Officially, naturally, nobody controls you. Officially on the face of it everything is free, but naturally on the ship we had this specialist in political control, and once I even caught him in my room when he was meddling in my personal belongings and reading my personal notes, so I asked him what he was doing and why he read my notes and he said: "Now I understand why you are not attending the political meetings as you should. Now I understand you behave as you behave." And I understood from his remarks that I would never be given permission to go on the foreign travels anymore on Soviet ships, and that is actually what was the last thing that forced me to jump off the ship in India.

The CHAIRMAN. At this point, you mentioned that you were not regularly or properly attending political meetings. Is attendance at them a matter of requirement? Would you say something about that?

Mr. TARASOV. It is, naturally, a requirement. Under different conditions you have to attend those meetings. I always tried to avoid them as much as possible, because it is very boring and it is all the time the same thing and it is this pack of lies that you have to listen to all the times. So under different conditions, with different explanations, I tried to avoid those meetings as much as I could.

The CHAIRMAN. He said, and I suppose you were translating what he said accurately, that it was naturally a requirement. What does he mean by that?

Mr. TARASOV. It happens like that, that you actually have, almost as a rule, once a week a meeting like that. There is no schedule. Just the political officer will call the meeting, come by the crew and tell them to come for the meeting, and that is it.

The CHAIRMAN. So that is it?

Mr. NITTLE. Did the crew generally find these meetings quite boring?

Mr. TARASOV (in English). Yes, they are boring.

Mr. NITTLE. A moment ago you mentioned the fact that, when you came upon the political officer searching your belongings, he then remarked or indicated that you would in the future probably be restricted in your travel to foreign ports aboard Soviet vessels. Did he explain to you why he reached that conclusion?

Mr. TARASOV (through interpreter). No, he doesn't have to explain anything to you.

The CHAIRMAN. Coming back to these meetings, I would like to ask two or three questions so he can develop what I have in mind. Number 1, were you a registered voter in the Soviet Union, did you vote, and was there a choice of candidates for office?

Mr. TARASOV (in English). There is just one candidate that they give me, and I have no choice. There was a bulletin in the box and that was all.

The CHAIRMAN. Only one candidate?

Mr. TARASOV. Yes, only one candidate.

The CHAIRMAN. It makes it nice.

Mr. JOHANSEN. I assume that you were not a member of the Communist Party?

Mr. TARASOV. No, I was not.

The CHAIRMAN. That is important—who are members of the Communist Party, official members of the party, as distinguished from those bound by the party's rules. Were any of the ship's crew members of the Communist Party?

Mr. TARASOV (through interpreter). About 10 percent of the sailors belonged to the Communist Party.

Mr. JOHANSEN. Is it a matter of seeking membership and being accepted? In other words, is it something difficult to get into?

Mr. TARASOV. Only those can become members for whom there are some other members vouching, so it is a question of belonging to the circle. You have to have somebody to stand behind you to become the member.

Mr. POOL. What percentage of the people that you came in contact with in Russia are unhappy because of the Communist dictatorship there?

Mr. TARASOV. It is very difficult for me to say any percentages here because it is impossible just like that, but I met a lot of people that were expressing openly that they were unhappy with the system, and with more of them you could see they were unhappy more than they said.

Mr. POOL. What was their greatest complaint?

Mr. TARASOV. Actually the most response for complaint is that there is a big apparatus of the party pressuring everybody in the whole country and doing nothing but pressuring. They are actually being paid for the pressure that they exert on the population and they don't produce anything. They are in excess of the economic life of the country. Actually the country has to support them only for the fact that they are pressuring the rest of the population.

Mr. POOL. Would a great many others defect if given a chance?

Mr. TARASOV. As far as I can judge, a lot of people would like to defect. It is very difficult, however. It is almost impossible to defect on a large scale. It is a very difficult thing to do, but as much as I can judge, a lot of people would like to do it.

Mr. NITTLE. Did you have any worries or apprehensions in making your decision to defect?

Mr. TARASOV (in English). Yes.

(Through interpreter.) I have several points that were worrying me when I made the decision and that is why I was delaying the action on it. First of all, naturally, I was thinking about my parents. However, I left my home in 1954. It was so many years ago, and I was a small kid at that time. They couldn't have been accused of influencing me in any possible way because I was away from home for such a long time and I was entirely on my own since 1954, so this is what made my decision easier, that I could not hurt them in any possible way by defecting.

The second thing is my wife. I was married. But with my wife we didn't have any family life at all. I had a son. I met my wife usually only on the weekends. She was living with her parents. We did not have an apartment. We wanted one but we couldn't get

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one. She lived with her parents, and I continued to live in a school, so I did not have much in common with her and she could not influence me much. My meetings with her were casual.

Mr. POOL. In that connection I wanted to ask if you discussed your plans, your intentions, with any other members aboard the ship?

Mr. TARASOV (in English). No; you would never do things like that.

(Through interpreter). The next point that I was thinking about was what was going to be expected of me in the Western World when I defect. I heard a lot of stories about it on the ship, a lot of stories that were naturally planted on us with a purpose, and the question was that so many of our sailors, after escaping, had difficulties to accommodate themselves in the Western World.

I know it is true of someone who went to Paris and later on had to go back to the Soviet Union because the working conditions in Paris were too difficult for him. He had no profession and he did not know the language. This worried me.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me say in this connection, Mr. Tarasov, because of the Iron Curtain and because of the propaganda spread in the Soviet Union about the fate of defectors, we all appreciate the worries and fears of those who are trying to decide if they should make a bid for freedom.

The one fact that I wish I could put over to all prisoners of communism is that the record proves beyond doubt that they have no reason to worry about the reception they will get in the free world.

Let me point out that, as long as careful screening by agencies such as those which subjected you to questions—so long as this screening process reveals that they are not threats to the security of the free world, they will be received.

Let me spell this out directly:

From July 1, 1945, through June 30, 1962, over 43,000 persons fled the Soviet Union as you have, and they were received in the United States.

During the same period, almost 270,000 escapees and refugees from the satellite nations of Europe, excluding Hungary and Yugoslavia, were admitted to the United States.

Over 54,000 persons from Yugoslavia came to this country during those years.

About 200,000 Hungarians fled their country during and immediately after the 1956 revolution. Almost 38,000 of them were received in this country and the others all found refuge in other nations of the free world.

West Germany, alone, has welcomed more than three million persons who have fled from Communist East Germany over the years.

Since Castro seized power in Cuba, over 256,000 Cuban refugees and escapees have found asylum in these United States.

When a truce was signed in Korea in 1953, which we all will recall or should recall, over 20,000 Chinese prisoners of war were held by the U.N. forces. They were given their choice of going back to Communist China or seeking freedom. Almost 15,000 of these men asked for freedom and were granted their request.

The life of a refugee, defector, or escapee is not an easy one. Your life here will not be a bed of roses, I assure you, but I am glad that

you, like so many thousands of others, made the choice you did. I am sure it was the right choice. I hope it will help to inspire others to do the same.

Mr. TARASOV (in English). Thank you.

Mr. NITTLE. In that connection, Mr. Tarasov, we might ask you how you now feel about your former worries, concerning the treatment you would receive in the free world?

Mr. TARASOV. For the first thing, I was very glad to read an article in an Indian newspaper that my wife now works in Moscow University as a lecturer. The second reason, I found here that all my hope about the United States, like a free country, is really true what I thought before about it; and I am glad very glad to live in the country where the law according to which you live—not like in Russia, where it is only for the power of one hand, where they might just pick up a phone and phone to somebody and put you in jail when they like to do, without any law, because they have only the law on the paper and they never used it in their lives.

The CHAIRMAN. When a person is subjected to an arrest in the United States, a written charge is filed against him giving the reason for the arrest. Does one receive that kind of a paper, a charge against one?

Mr. TARASOV. I was not entitled to a reason. According to Russian constitution, since the party may change, they can do anything.

The CHAIRMAN. You answered to one question that your wife lived with her parents. How many were in the household?

Mr. TARASOV (through interpreter). There were eight persons and they had four rooms altogether.

The CHAIRMAN. What were those rooms? Did that include a kitchen, or what?

Mr. TARASOV. A kitchen and three rooms, and there were eight persons living in it.

The CHAIRMAN. Did they own the home?

Mr. TARASOV. This was the house that was owned by the father-in-law.

Mr. TUCK. Have you and your wife communicated with each other since you have escaped?

Mr. TARASOV (in English). No, I have not.

Mr. TUCK. Where do you live now?

Mr. TARASOV. I am living in the Washington area.

Mr. NITTLE. Were you a member of the Komsomol, that is, a member of the Young Communist League?

Mr. TARASOV. Yes, I was.

Mr. NITTLE. When did you join it?

Mr. TARASOV. In 1954.

Mr. NITTLE. Would you tell the committee why you joined it?

Mr. TARASOV. Because I was interested in going to nautical school and it is very difficult to go to the nautical school without being a member of the Komsomol Union.

Mr. TUCK. Have you secured employment anywhere since you have been here?

Mr. TARASOV (through interpreter). No, I have not had a chance to work yet. I was attending the school at Georgetown University.

The CHAIRMAN. Did you speak English before you came to the United States?

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Mr. TARASOV. In practical terms; I knew a few terms but I did not know the language.

The CHAIRMAN. I will say you have made amazing progress.

Mr. NITTLE. Are all young people required to become members of the Komsomol, or is it a matter of choice with them?

Mr. TARASOV. Nobody officially forces you to go to Komsomol, the Young Communist League, but if you are not a member, most of the better schools will be closed to you, so you are closing the door to yourself for better education if you are not a member.

Mr. NITTLE. What is the age limitation on membership in the Komsomol?

Mr. TARASOV. Between 14 and 24.

Mr. NITTLE. Based on your experience in the Soviet Union, would you tell the committee why most Communist Party members join the party? Is it because they are dedicated believers in Marxism and Leninism?

Mr. TARASOV. It is a question of education. You immediately become a party member and you get a lot of privileges coming with it. I don't think most of them are dedicated Communists. They just joined the party for privileges.

Mr. NITTLE. Do the party members actually accept, and believe in, the doctrines of Marxism and Leninism?

Mr. TARASOV. As far as I understand, they don't.

Mr. BRUCE. May I pursue a point here?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, sir.

Mr. BRUCE. Are you speaking now on an assumption or on knowledge that those who are in the Communist Party are there because they desire privilege and not because they believe in the Communist program?

Mr. TARASOV. It is very difficult to answer this question, but I spoke to many party members in the Soviet Union. I was among them for quite some time, and mostly they don't give the impression to be dedicated Communists in private relationships when you are with them.

Some of them would not actually know what Marxism and Leninism is. They would be able to repeat sentences at times but they don't understand it.

Mr. BRUCE. Is it your impression, then, that those that you have associated with are being used by dedicated men at the higher level in the Communist apparatus?

Mr. TARASOV. I must admit that I don't think the people up in the higher levels are even dedicated Communists.

Mr. BRUCE. For one who has lived under a Communist state, how can you then explain the fanaticism of the Communist parties throughout the world where they are not under the domination of the Soviet Government?

Mr. TARASOV. My impression is that international communism is possible only because most of those who are far away from what the real life in the Communist country means are still idealists who think they are promoting a good idea. Those that are in the country itself and that see this thing being realized in the country are losing the belief and are losing their Marxism-Leninism doctrine.

The further you are from the center, the more you are easily indoctrinated in this theoretical type of Marxism.

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Mr. NITTLE. Mr. Tarasov, in your opinion, how effective was the Komsomol, at least the unit you belonged to, in winning Soviet youth to communism?

Mr. TARASOV. It would be difficult to answer this. There is no specific indoctrination, as a matter of fact, in the younger organizations.

I don't think they have a very great interest.

Mr. NITTLE. Apparently your views appear to be substantiated by an article published in *Komsomol'skaya Pravda* on May 16 of this year, not long after you were freed by an Indian court. This article was written by the deputy head of the section for the Industrial Komsomol Organizations for Union Republics of All-Union Komsomol Central Committee. I will read just a few excerpts from this article.

The CHAIRMAN. That is an article from what?

Mr. NITTLE. It is written by the deputy head of section for Industrial Komsomol Organizations for Union Republics of All-Union Komsomol Central Committee.

The CHAIRMAN. What is "Komsomol organizations"?

Mr. NITTLE. The Young Communist League.

I will read a few excerpts from this article, Mr. Tarasov, and then ask you to comment on them:

\* \* \* it is especially important to indoctrinate young sailors with a sense of Soviet patriotism and an acute implacability toward bourgeois ideology and morals. This is the first word for Komsomol leaders. \* \* \*

\* \* \* The Komsomol activists of the steamship line and the port cities—Odessa, Nikolayev, Batumi, and Novorossiysk—have given no thought to how best to acquaint the young sailors with the achievements of the Soviet people, or with the work in enterprises, at construction sites, and on kolkhozes and sovkhozes.

In its decree, the All-Union Komsomol Central Committee suggested that Komsomol organizations of sea transport, rayon Komsomol committees, city and oblast Komsomol committees, and the Komsomol Central Committees of union republics strengthen ideological and political work among the youth of the fleet and train them in the spirit of principles of the moral code of builders of Communism.

Young sailors have distant and long roads. Their ideological training and their moral stability must be safe and without the slightest "gap"!

Do you believe, Mr. Tarasov, that your defection may have had something to do with the publication of this article and the decree mentioned in it?

Mr. TARASOV. It is quite possible.

Mr. NITTLE. Do you have any other comments to make on the article?

Mr. TARASOV. It is a usual procedure when something like that happens. They usually have meetings and articles of that type to discipline the Communists.

Mr. NITTLE. Now that you are in the United States, will you tell the committee what your plans for the future are?

Mr. TARASOV. First of all, I would like to continue my education. I started my education in electronics in the Soviet Union and I hope I can get a scholarship of some kind and I would like to finish my education first, to become a useful citizen.

Mr. NITTLE. Mr. Chairman, that concludes the staff interrogation.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Tarasov, obviously you were not a big name in the Communist world in your struggle with its bureaucracy, but there are many others like you in this country. You will not be alone

and you, as an individual, will now have opportunities within your reach which you never had in the Soviet Union. This committee is completely satisfied that your disillusionment with communism is complete because of information we have received from the very thorough screening you have gone through with the security agencies.

With that, good luck.

Mr. SCHADEBERG. I have just a few questions on some unrelated matters I have been saving up.

Were you allowed liberty, when you served aboard the ship, in other ports?

Mr. TARASOV. We did not have too much freedom as sailors in the Soviet Union when we went to a foreign port. Usually we were grouped into groups of four or five, and one of them is usually a senior, and he must be a Communist and he is responsible for the group, as such, to come back to the ship.

We go to some places like markets and what not, shop in the windows, and then we come back to the ship.

Mr. SCHADEBERG. Do you serve on a ship by your own request, or are you sent there by authority? Do you have a right to choose your own job?

Mr. TARASOV. In my case, I was undergoing a year's practice experience. I was off school for a year and this year was necessary. It was part of my education, so I was assigned to the ship on the basis of my vocation. Basically, however, you have to have an open visa, so-called, as it is called in the records in the Soviet Union, so you do have to be reliable enough to get this sailor's open visa.

Mr. SCHADEBERG. What about tours in general? In your mind, do you think that most Soviet citizens would like to travel abroad, either permanently or otherwise?

Mr. TARASOV (in English). I think so, but it is not available.

Mr. SCHADEBERG. In other words, it is not possible, generally, for a citizen to get a tourist visa to go abroad; and if they do go abroad, what about the ones who do travel—how are they chosen, if you know?

Mr. TARASOV (through interpreter). I don't know anything about it. I never had a chance to meet people of that type.

Mr. SCHADEBERG. I have another unrelated question. In your own mind and in your own experience, do people in Russia believe what they read in *Izvestia*, *Pravda*, and so forth?

Mr. TARASOV. I don't think so.

Mr. SCHADEBERG. What sort of feeling do you believe exists between the various people of Russia like the Russians, Georgians, and so forth, in the different parts of Russia?

Mr. TARASOV. I don't think there is any hatred between those nationalities.

Mr. SCHADEBERG. This is a personal matter. Were you exposed in your earlier life to any religious life in the church or the doctrines of the church?

Mr. TARASOV. I believe in God. That is what I know, but I never was exposed to any religious training.

Mr. SCHADEBERG. Is that because of the training of your parents, or is that just an innate thing?

Mr. TARASOV. No, it is my own belief. I read the Bible and I was interested in this thing. It is my personal belief.

Mr. SCHADEBERG. Could you read the Bible in Russia if you wished?

Mr. TARASOV. The Bible is available.

Mr. SCHADEBERG. Are there churches open in the various cities, or are there communities where there are no churches open?

Mr. TARASOV. There are churches in the Soviet Union and they are attended.

Mr. SCHADEBERG. Do many people attend them?

Mr. TARASOV. Specifically in the rural areas the churches are attended very regularly.

Mr. SCHADEBERG. By young and old alike?

Mr. TARASOV. Usually it is just people who are older who go to church.

Mr. SCHADEBERG. Is there any unemployment, as such, in Russia?

Mr. TARASOV. There is no such term as "unemployment" in the Soviet Union. It is not in existence.

Mr. SCHADEBERG. Everyone would be taken care of by the state. There would be none in need of it?

Mr. TARASOV. That is right. Everybody is employed in the Soviet Union.

Mr. SCHADEBERG. I have one other question. It is about crime. We hear in various parts of the world about crime. Is there crime or theft, and so on, in the Soviet Union?

Mr. TARASOV. It is difficult to say. I have no statistics. Naturally there are thefts, and we hear about them, but our press never wrote anything about it so it is very difficult to make a judgment about it.

Mr. BRUCE. I would like to join the chairman in welcoming you as a refugee from a total state onto the shores where we regard the rights of the individual as being sacred. The few questions I have are asked only for the purpose of gaining a perspective and evaluating the depth of testimony here in certain areas.

As I understand it, you have not been a member of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union?

Mr. TARASOV (in English). No.

Mr. BRUCE. Have you ever received any courses in the period of your education, which has been identified as higher than our high school, on such subjects as dialectical materialism?

Mr. TARASOV. No, I never had a course like that.

Mr. BRUCE. Have you ever had any courses in the period of your education on Marxism-Leninism, as such?

Mr. TARASOV. No.

Mr. BRUCE. Then, to summarize: Your testimony here is that of a citizen who was enslaved by a total state but not as an expert on the theory of Marxism-Leninism?

Mr. TARASOV. Yes, sir; that is exactly the case.

Mr. BRUCE. Thank you very much.

Mr. ICHORD. I understand your wife was a member of the Communist Party?

Mr. TARASOV. No, she was not.

Mr. ICHORD. I was rather interested in the political officer aboard ship. What kind of quarters did he have on his ship? What was the nature of his quarters?

Mr. TARASOV. He is the first assistant to the captain of the ship and has no other duties but the political indoctrination and control.



Mr. ICHORD. He had no other duties?

Mr. TARASOV. No other duties but the political indoctrination and control.

Mr. ICHORD. He was considered as inferior to the captain so far as command was concerned?

Mr. TARASOV. Yes, he was under the captain, as his right hand.

Mr. ICHORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Tarasov, would you care to make a final statement in your own words before we come to a conclusion? If it is easier, you can say it to the interpreter. You may be able to express your thoughts better that way, if you care to.

Mr. FEDAY. He wants to make it himself.

Mr. TARASOV. I appreciate all of the efforts of the people who have helped me to come to the United States of America, which is a free country, and I would like to be a good citizen of the United States of America.

The CHAIRMAN. You couldn't have said anything better. Thank you very much. This will conclude the interrogation of this witness.

(Whereupon, at 11:45 a.m. Thursday, September 19, 1963, the committee adjourned, subject to call of the Chair.)

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